

## Community resources

[Follow us on Twitter](#) [Check our Reddit](#) [Twitter this](#) [Digg this page](#) [Contact us on IRC](#)

*courage is contagious*

## Viewing cable 09MONTERREY453, MONTERREY SHOOTOUTS LEAVE 17 DEAD, EXPOSE SHORTCOMINGS IN

If you are new to these pages, please read an introduction on the [structure of a cable](#) as well as how to [discuss them](#) with others. See also the [FAQs](#)

### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#09MONTERREY453**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09MONTERREY453	2009-12-14 15:23	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Consulate Monterrey

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2011/02/10/index.php?section=politica&article=006n1pol>

VZCZCXRO5475  
PP RUEHCD RUEHGD RUEHHO RUEHNG RUEHNL RUEHRD RUEHRS RUEHTM  
DE RUEHMC #0453/01 3481523  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 141523Z DEC 09  
FM AMCONSUL MONTERREY  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4146  
INFO RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY 5231  
RUEHXC/ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE  
RHMFISS/FBI WASHINGTON DC  
RUEABND/DEA HQ WASHDC  
RHMFISS/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC  
RHMFISS/HQ USNORTHCOM  
RUEFHLC/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHMC/AMCONSUL MONTERREY 9774

239746  
2009-12-14 15:23:00  
09MONTERREY453  
Consulate Monterrey  
CONFIDENTIAL  
09MONTERREY415  
VZCZCXRO5475  
PP RUEHCD RUEHGD RUEHHO RUEHNG RUEHNL RUEHRD RUEHRS RUEHTM  
DE RUEHMC #0453/01 3481523  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 141523Z DEC 09

FM AMCONSUL MONTERREY  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4146  
INFO RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY 5231  
RUEHXC/ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE  
RHMFISS/FBI WASHINGTON DC  
RUEABND/DEA HQ WASHDC  
RHMFISS/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC  
RHMFISS/HQ USNORTHCOM  
RUEFHLC/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHMC/AMCONSUL MONTERREY 9774

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MONTERREY 000453

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/14/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KCRM](#) [KCOR](#) [ASEC](#) [SNAR](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [MX](#)

SUBJECT: MONTERREY SHOOTOUTS LEAVE 17 DEAD, EXPOSE SHORTCOMINGS IN  
STATE'S CRIME FIGHTING APPARATUS

REF: A) MONTERREY 415

MONTERREY 00000453 001.2 OF 003

CLASSIFIED BY: Bruce Williamson, Consul General, US Consulate  
General Monterrey, Department of State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: A wave of gang violence rocked Monterrey on December 4 as well-armed criminals faced down the Mexican marines in the Monterrey suburb of Juarez during an attempt to arrest a Los Zetas drug gang leader implicated in the assassination of a suburban police chief. The day culminated in a major jailbreak which saw 23 alleged gang members and sympathizers set free and led to an hours-long shutdown of a major northern thoroughfare. In the aftermath of the action, termed by one newspaper as Nuevo Leon's "bloodiest day," 17 people lay dead, several more were wounded and authorities arrested 16 gang members. Officials are still unsure as to whether the original target of the operation, Ricardo Almanza Morales, aka "El Gori 1" escaped or was killed in the fight. The run-up to the firefight and the events surrounding it underscored a concerning lack of coordination, and possibly will, among key elements in the fight against the drug cartels. End summary.

#### Arrest Attempt Becomes Battle

-----

¶2. (SBU) On December 4, Mexican marines, dispatched by Navy commanders, stormed a ranch in the Monterrey suburb of Juarez in an attempt to capture Ricardo Almanza Morales, aka "El Gori 1," the alleged planner of the November 4 execution of the police chief in the Monterrey suburb of Garcia (ref A.) The fighting began just before Friday rush hour and much of the later action occurred in a suburban area, next to the major highway from Monterrey to the border crossing in Hidalgo, TX, which was closed for much of the evening. This phase of the battle culminated in a thirty minute shootout during which eight members of the Los Zetas drug gang and one marine were killed. Nine Zeta gangsters were arrested.

#### Phase 2: Firefight Intensifies

-----

¶3. (C) The battle escalated when, following the initial confrontation, the marines requested support from a local army unit to transport a wounded marine and prisoners from the ranch. A group of Los Zetas traveling in a convoy of 10 - 12 SUVs attacked the army reinforcements using grenades and high-powered assault rifles as they were en route to rendezvous with the marines. A second shootout ensued, in which two more Zeta members and one innocent bystander were killed and a young girl was mortally wounded. Multiple vehicles exploded during the battle, killing at least two unidentified passengers who were handcuffed in the back of an SUV belonging to Los Zetas. Military officials arrested seven Zetas during this second confrontation and an unknown number of gangsters fled the scene. The next day, local newspapers prominently featured graphic photos of the dead and wounded along with burning vehicles. One

local newspaper, "El Milenio," termed December 4 Nuevo Leon's "bloodiest day" in Mexico's drug war.

#### Jailbreak in Aftermath

---

14. (C) Approximately one hour after the second gun battle, a group of Los Zetas drove through the gate of a jail in Escobedo, another Monterrey suburb, killed two federal police agents, wounded several others and released 23 of the 24 prisoners being held at the facility. DEA sources said that fifteen of the escapees, including two police officers, were members of a Zeta kidnapping cell arrested by the Mexican army in October. The two officers in charge of the jail claimed that they were out getting hot dogs when their jail was overrun. This was the fourth jailbreak organized by Los Zetas in Monterrey's consular district in the last eight months. (Comment: According to law enforcement sources, the jailbreaks have become particularly troublesome, not just because of their increasing frequency and brazenness, but because prisoners (especially police officers) who are released by Los Zetas become instantly beholden to them, if they were not already. End comment.)

#### Victims or Perpetrators?

---

15. (C) Press reports and law enforcement authorities claimed that the handcuffed passengers killed in the second confrontation were kidnapping victims, but Monterrey DEA sources said the bodies were burned beyond recognition and may never be identified. Mexican law enforcement sources told Post that narcotraffickers now commonly handcuff themselves if it appears that capture is imminent in an effort to look like innocent kidnapping victims and avoid arrest. (Comment: High profile kidnappings have continued in Monterrey and its affluent San Pedro suburb. Three prominent San Pedro businessmen have been kidnapped over the last two weeks, with one paid ransom

MONTERREY 00000453 002.2 OF 003

purportedly around US\$ 5 million. Two of the kidnapping victims are still missing. End comment.)

#### "Gori 1 - 4": The Almanza Brothers

---

16. (C) The marines' target, Ricardo Almanza Morales (aka El Gori 1), is one of four brothers involved with Los Zetas. Each of the Almanza brothers is known as "El Gori" (a derivative of the word gorilla in Spanish) because of their distinctive facial features. Brothers Raymundo Almanza (El Gori 2) and Octavio Almanza (El Gori 4) are both in custody in Mexico. El Gori 2 was arrested in May and, according to DEA sources, had been in charge of organizing Los Zetas arms shipments from Belize and Guatemala. El Gori 4 is the suspected mastermind of the February execution of General Mauro Enrique Tello Quinones in Cancun and has been implicated in the 2008 slayings of nine army soldiers in Monterrey.

17. (C) El Gori 3, Eduardo Almanza, is also associated with Los Zetas, but law enforcement sources say that he is the least important and influential of the brothers within the organization. All of the brothers were close associates of former Monterrey plaza boss Sigifredo Najera-Talamantes, aka "Canicon", who was arrested in Saltillo, Coahuila this March and are suspected to have been involved in numerous kidnappings and homicides in the Monterrey metropolitan area.

#### Which "Gori" Was Killed? Confusion Over Identities

---

18. (C) The press has widely reported that Ricardo Almanza (El Gori 1) died during the first firefight at the Juarez ranch on December 4. However, Post DEA determined that, based on army fingerprint records, only Eduardo Almanza (El Gori 4) could be confirmed dead. To further confuse the situation, on December 8, a woman claiming to be the mother of the Almanza brothers told the media that she does not have a son named Ricardo and that only her son Eduardo had been killed. DEA sources also confirmed that, contrary to media reports, Monterrey Zeta leader Jesus Alvarado-Sigaros, aka "El Flaco," had not been listed

among those killed in Juarez.

#### Law Enforcement, Military Struggle to Effectively Face Cartels

-----

¶9. (C) In Nuevo Leon, the public has applauded the army, with many business and civic leaders noting that over the past eighteen months it has been the only local institution capable of directly confronting the cartels. In this case, despite having intelligence as to Ricardo Almanza's location, army officials declined to take action, claiming his hideout was too well-fortified. In contrast, after navy officials learned of his whereabouts, they sent the marines to arrest him - the first such marine action in the state. The army was apparently unaware of the marines' activities until they called the army for support during the operation. Afterwards, army generals complained to Post that the navy action had made them look ineffective.

¶10. (C) At a December 7 meeting with CG, ICE, DEA and ATF, Nuevo Leon State Prosecutor Alejandro Garza y Garza used the events in Juarez to highlight shortcomings in the local law enforcement community. He said that the first two local police officers to arrive at the gun battle in Juarez fled the scene. (Note: State Secretary of Public Safety Carlos Jauregui confirmed to RSO on December 10 that several police officials reportedly fled after the marines appeared. End note.)

¶11. (C) To further illustrate the complexity of coordinating law enforcement actions, Garza displayed aerial photos of a parking lot at the Santa Lucia Riverwalk (a popular Monterrey tourist destination modeled after the river walk in San Antonio) where gangsters armed with semi-automatic weapons were charging visitors for parking and using the lot to store stolen cars. By the time the state called the military in to dislodge them from the lot (located on state land) and regained control of the property, the stolen cars had disappeared.

#### Comment

-----

¶12. (C) The confusion surrounding this latest incident in Monterrey served to highlight the lack of coordination and will among law enforcement officials as they struggle to deal with increasing organized crime violence. The army, long considered the most reliable partner in the struggle to contain the cartels, surprisingly refused to take the lead in capturing a criminal responsible for assassinating a former army general, leaving the navy as the only dependable actor in this case.

MONTERREY 00000453 003.2 OF 003

¶13. (C) Cartels have continued to operate with impunity in Nuevo Leon. Ricardo Almanza (El Gori 1) moved openly in a large convoy throughout the Monterrey metropolitan area for a month after being named the prime suspect behind the assassination of the Garcia police chief, the state was unable to stop a major prison break despite having already been alerted to intense criminal activity in the area, and organized criminals operated a stolen car ring in broad view on state property. Authorities also lack the forensic capability needed to identify victims and, presumably, to conduct thorough crime scene investigations. If there is a positive side, it appears that government operations have forced Los Zetas to resort to risky jail breaks to replenish their ranks with seasoned gangsters. However, due to a combination of police incompetence and corruption, they have been able to successfully do so.

¶14. (C) The long-term ability of the government to fight the cartels is hampered by budgetary concerns (only around 3.5% of the state's budget is dedicated to law enforcement and prosecution) and corruption. Secretary of Public Safety Carlos Jauregui and State Prosecutor Alejandro Garza y Garza confirmed to RSO on December 10 that Nuevo Leon is having difficulty recruiting competent police officers because of low pay and safety concerns and that its new C5 command and control facility is understaffed. (Note: In an effort to address concerns over chronically low pay, Jauregui has sought to increase police

salaries and started a program to help officers pay for housing.  
End note)

¶15. (C) Jauregui told RSO that his force of 4,000 police officers is 1,000 members below its target size and that, of those 4,000 officers, only about one quarter are doing substantive police work, the rest being assigned to administrative or protective duties. It is unlikely that the state will be able to fill those 1,000 positions any time soon; Jauregui admitted that only 10 percent of prospective police recruits are able to clear the vetting process. Until state officials address these inherent problems with law enforcement, Nuevo Leon seems condemned to take one step forward and two backward in its ongoing campaign against organized crime.  
WILLIAMSONB